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Response Paper 4, *Beloved*

In *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, the section we read focuses on slaver and the long lasting effects it has on slaves. *Beloved* effectively shows the negative effects of how slavery can impact a person’s mental stability by supporting the idea that one should not love anything too much. Morrison demonstrates this turmoil through the actions of two characters, Sethe and Paul D, and each character shows how slavery has shaped them and warped their personalities.

Sethe’s character demonstrates an intense love for her children after her escape from slavery that was not present during her time as a slave. Through Sethe Morrison shows that even after the era of slavery and 18 years after the death of her baby Sethe is still haunted, both literally by the baby ghost and figuratively by punishing herself for her actions by living in the haunted house and having to deal with her actions head on. Beloveds murder irrevocably changed Sehtes life and the livesof those around her. Her actions bring Baby Suggs, who knew the devastating effects of slavery, into a state of depression, it made her remaining children distrust her and solidified the towns “exile” of Sethe. When Morrison opens the chapter with “When the four horsemen came…” the reference to the book of Revelations the four horsemen bring the end of days and the apocalypse takes on two meanings. The first is that it is the end of life for Sethe’s children because she sees slavery as an option worse than death and because she loves her children she attempts to kill her children to spear them from a life of servitude. The second meaning is that it is the end of the way life had just begun to be; with freedom came the ability to love freely and the idea that a person could “get to a place where you could love anything you chose…” (191). This extreme response to the idea of being brought back into slavery and being unable to love because nothing was truly yours to love show the detrimental effects of slavery on a person.

Paul D takes on the mindset to never love anything too much because it is dangerous and that it will eventually be taken away from you. Paul D tells Sethe that her love and attachment to her children is “too thick” (193). Sethe’s because attachment her children is so strong and her experience of slavery so horrifying that it leads her to inexcusable crimes to her own children.

Throughout the story, Morrison brings up topic of slavery and its impact on ex-slaves. Paul D see this act as animalistic when he tells Sethe that she has “two feet…not four” meaning that her actions were that of an animal and not a civilized human being. Shortly after Paul D sees that Sethe is still extremely emotionally attached to her children, Denver and the new girl Beloved, he leaves 124, for good.

Morrison uses Sethe and Paul D to show that even in the era after slavery the effect of it were embedded in slaves forever. It alters the mind set about how to live and what to love. Having Sethe love her children *to death* and Paul D never love fully again shows opposing view points on how slavery’s effects people and embraces the idea that the thought of going back into slavery could push a person to the extremes far outside of social norm.